

CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) Apparatus for obtaining personal information related to a target person, comprising:

a user device comprising an image acquisition device for capturing an image of said target person;

a database of stored image data items each relating to one of a plurality of candidate persons, each image data item being associated with stored personal data relating to the respective candidate person;

a search engine for matching the captured image of the target person to a candidate person image data item and retrieving the personal data relating thereto, wherein a search is limited to candidate person image data items that relate to further user devices that are in the same geographical area as the user device;

an output device for presenting, to a user, the personal data relating to the target person; and

control means, operable by each candidate person, to control third party access to the stored personal data relating to the candidate person.

2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 in which the database is a distributed database, the candidate persons each having a portable device for storing their own image data items and personal data which may be accessed by the search engine using a wireless communication channel.

3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 2 in which the control means comprises an access control function provided on each portable device.

4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 in which the database includes a central repository accessible to a plurality of remote portable devices using said wireless communication channel.

5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 4 in which the control means is a distributed control means, the candidate persons each having a device for storing their own image data items and personal data onto the database and determining third party access rights thereto.

6. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said portable device is portable electronic device comprising the image acquisition device, output device and control means integrated into said portable device.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 in which the portable electronic device is any of a personal digital assistant, personal computer or mobile telephony device.

8. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 6 in which the portable electronic device further includes communication means for communication with a remotely located database and the search engine.

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1 in which the output device is a display device for displaying the personal data relating to the target person.

10. (Previously Presented) A portable device for obtaining personal information related to a target person, comprising:

an image acquisition device for capturing an image of said target person;

means for accessing a remote database of stored image data items each of relating to one of a plurality of candidate persons, each image data item being associated with personal data relating to the respective candidate person;

means for retrieving the personal data relating to a candidate person for which the captured image data of the target person matches the stored image data item of the candidate person;

an output device for presenting, to a user, the retrieved personal data relating to the target person; and

control means to control third party access to the database of personal data relating to said candidate person;

wherein the means for accessing and the means for retrieving include a wireless communication device that is adapted to communicate with a plurality of further portable devices, the further portable devices together forming the remote database; and

wherein the range of the wireless communication device limits the further portable devices that form the remote database to the geographical area of the portable device.

11. Cancelled.

12. (Previously Presented) The portable device of claim 10 comprising a personal digital assistant, personal computer or mobile telephony device having integrated into the portable device.

13. Cancelled.

14. (Previously Presented) A system for providing personal information related to a target person, comprising:

a database of stored image data items each relating to one of a plurality of candidate persons, each image data item being associated with personal data relating to the respective candidate person;

means for receiving, from a remote user device including an image acquisition device, a captured image of said target person;

a search engine for matching the captured image of the target person to a candidate person image data item and retrieving the personal data relating thereto, wherein a search is limited to candidate person image data items that relate to further user devices that are in the same geographical area as the remote user device;

means for transmitting, to a remote output device, the personal data relating to the target person; and

control means, operable by each candidate person, to control third party access to the stored personal data relating to the candidate person.

15. (Previously Presented) A method of obtaining information related to a target person, comprising the steps of:

capturing an image of said target person, the image captured by a user device including an image acquisition device;

supplying image data from the captured image to a database of stored image data items each relating to one of a plurality of candidate persons, each image data item being associated with personal data relating to the respective candidate person;

searching the database to match the captured image of the target person with a candidate person image data item and retrieving the personal data relating thereto, wherein a search is limited to candidate person image data items that relate to further user devices that are in the same geographical area as the user device;

outputting the personal data relating to the target person; and

maintaining the database by enabling control, by each candidate person, of third party access to the personal data relating to said candidate person.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15 and further comprising of the step of attaching a digital signature to said supplied image data.

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 16 wherein the step of said outputting the personal data will not occur unless the attached digital signature is established to be valid and authentic.

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15 wherein said step of outputting personal data involves outputting encrypted personal data.

19. (Currently Amended) A computer program product, comprising a computer readable medium storing thereon computer program code means adapted, when said program is loaded onto a computing apparatus, to make the computing apparatus form the device of claim 10.

20. Cancelled.